

My Life at the Hatchery

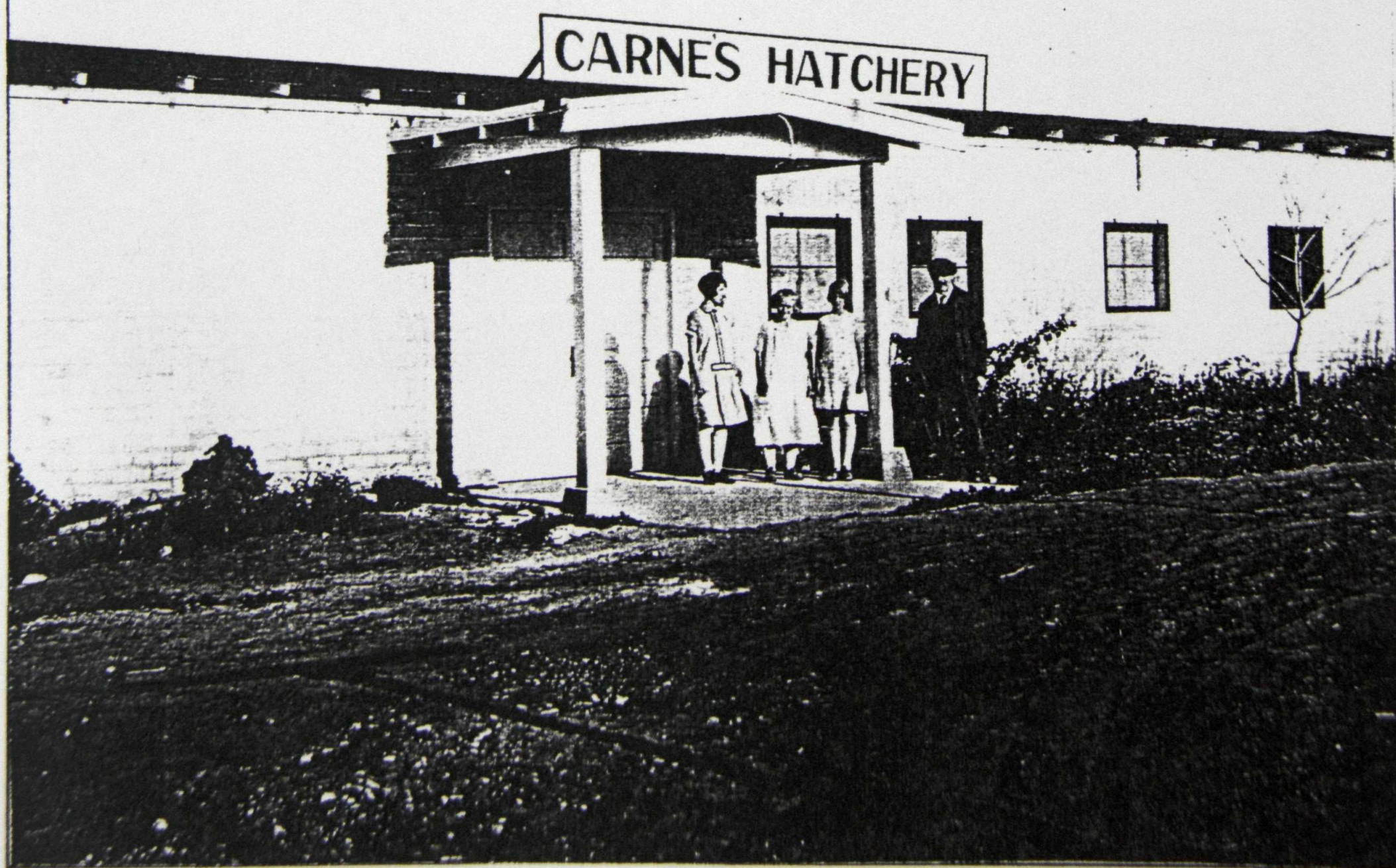
by

Edith Carne Wyatt

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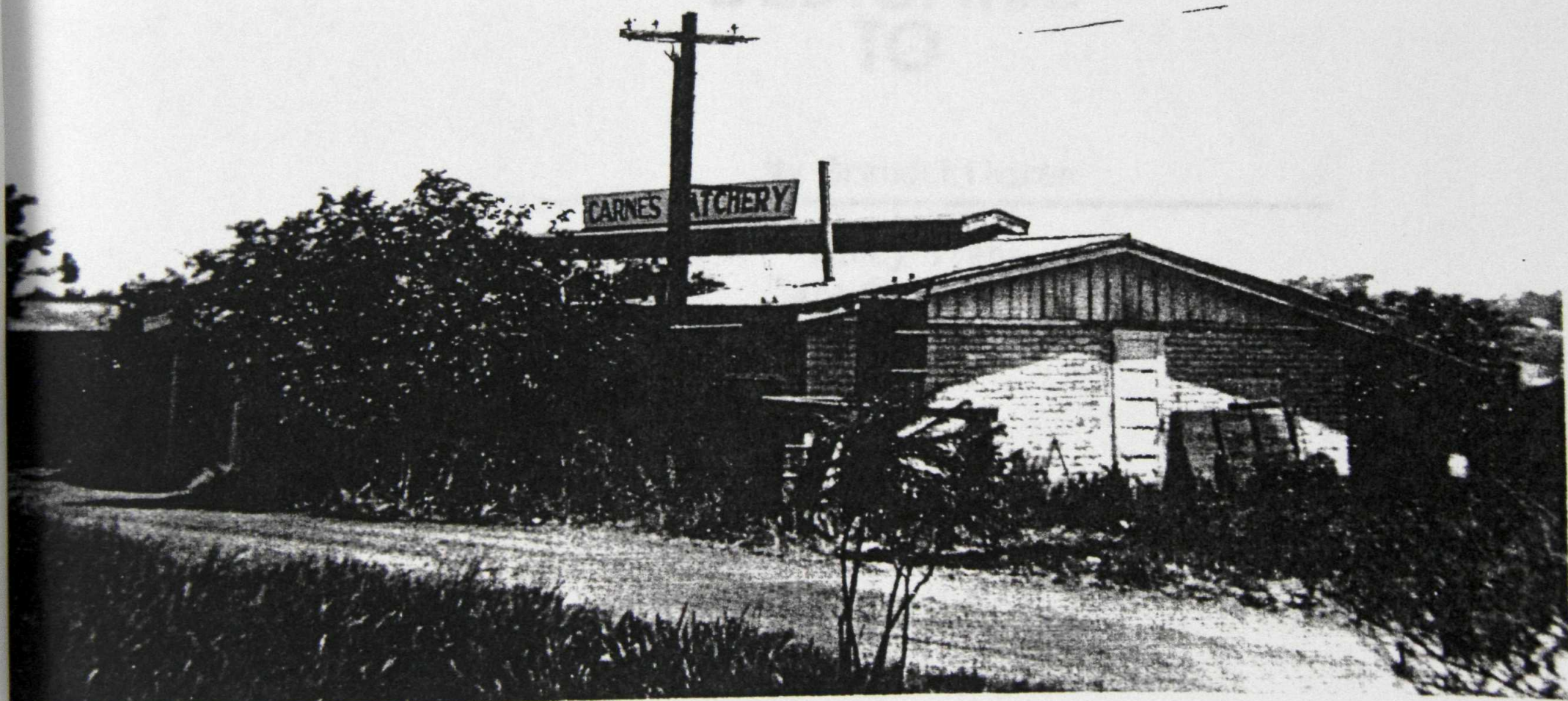
HATCHERY

Edith Anne Wyatt

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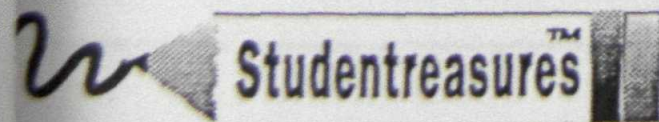
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MY BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

My Grandchildren

Nancy Irene
Sara Elizabeth
Cynthia Mary

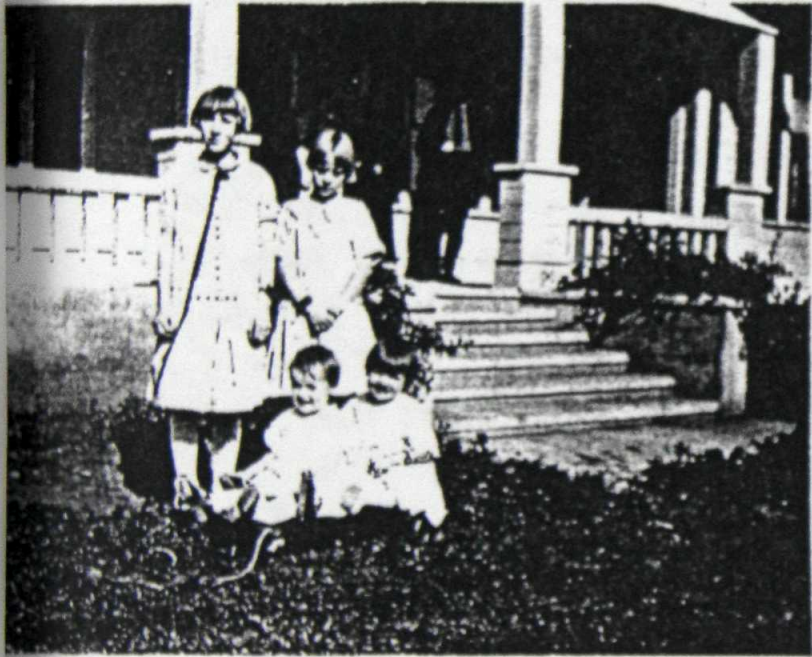


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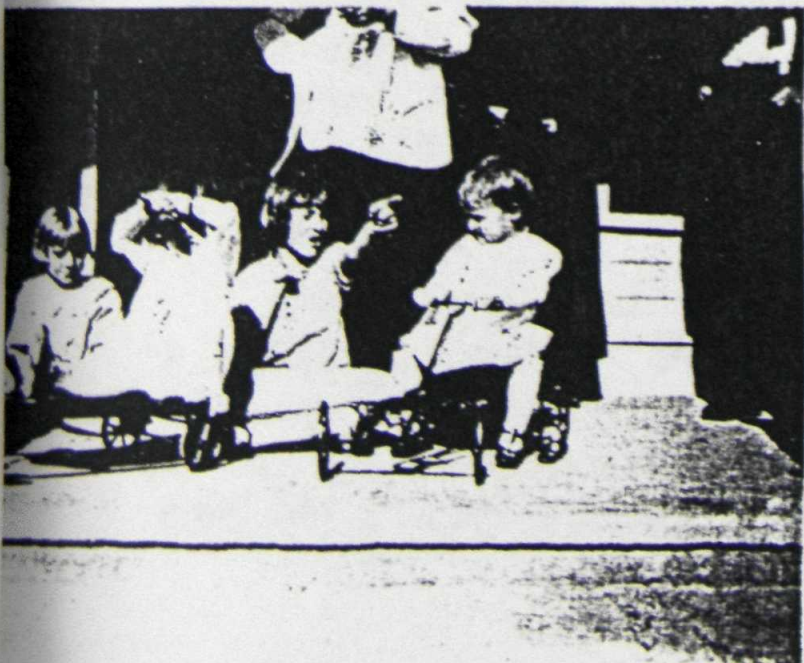
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In our front yard with relatives. Aileen and Bernice were the babies.



It was in 1923 when we moved to a 5-acre chicken ranch in National City that Uncle Ernest and Aunt Sadie with their 9-month old baby Aileen came from Tuolumne County to manage the chicken ranch in Bonita. My parents hatched eggs for other people using several small 500-egg capacity incubators. Our job was to turn the eggs by hand as soon as we came home from school. The hired men lifted the trays but Dorothy and I turned the eggs before we were allowed to play with other children. For this work which took about 1½ hours per day, we were paid \$1.00 per week. By the time I reached high school age, my mother decided it would be better to spend my time doing school work. That was when they acquired a 30,000 egg incubator that we could walk inside. The hired men turned the eggs twice a day in just a few minutes by using a lever. Eventually they acquired two more large incubators, one 47,000 eggs and the other one was 52,000 eggs--for a total of 129,000 eggs. That meant that they had the facilities for producing 129,000 baby chickens every three weeks. Of course, the eggs didn't all hatch!!! Besides chicken eggs, they also hatched whatever other people brought such as duck, goose, or turkey, and once in a while, peacock, pheasant, or quail. This capacity made our hatchery the largest one in San Diego County. There was one in La Mesa, another in Escondido, and also one in Ramona. Besides hatching eggs that other people brought, they sold chickens which had been hatched from eggs shipped in from places all over the country, Missouri, Washington, Western Canada. I remember in 1930 when we were on a trip in Vancouver, Canada, we visited the people who sent us eggs. We were treated royally. They helped us get on a boat which took us to Skagway, Alaska.

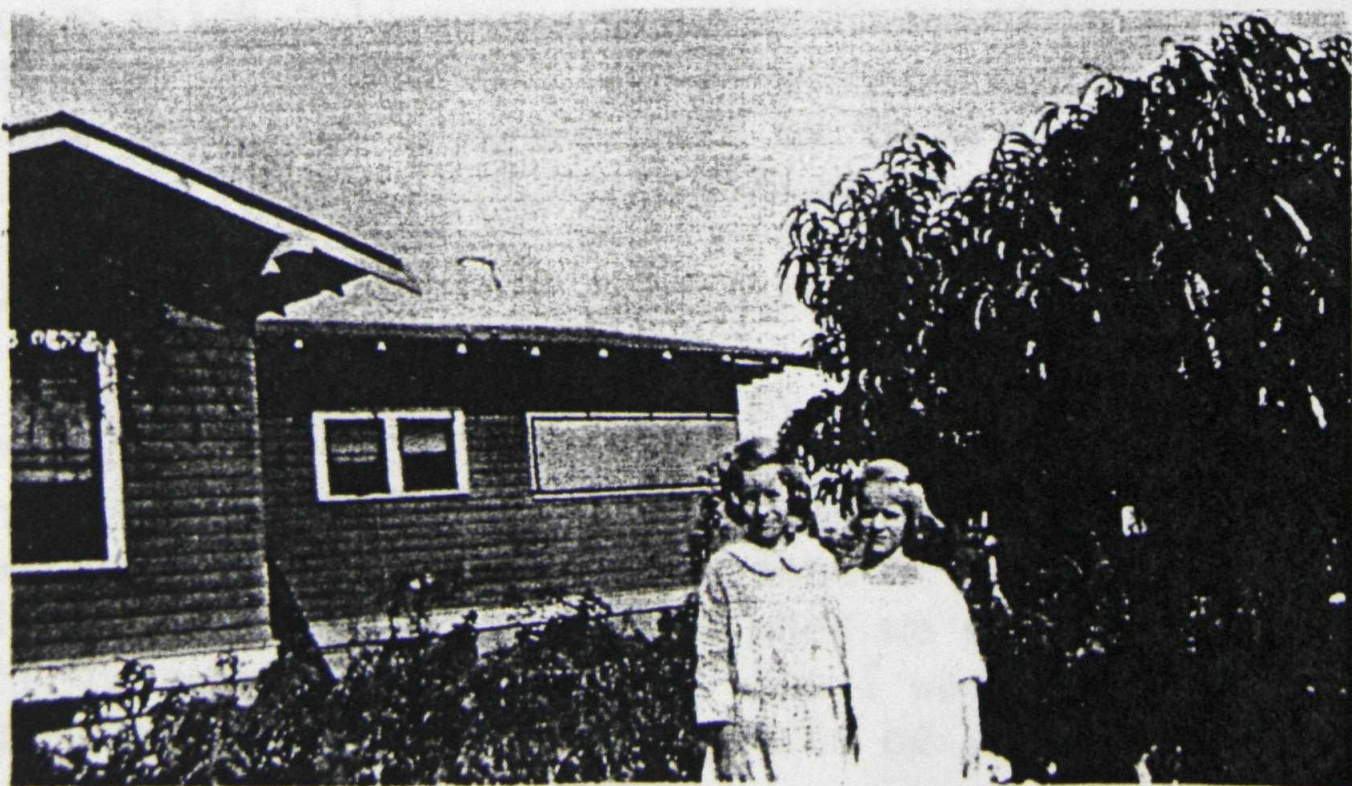
In National City, we had a housekeeper and two hired men at all times. The housekeeper did all cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, etc. One week we had too many dresses in the wash and they had to be ironed. Wash-and-wear had not been invented. She did not like to iron, so she made a deal with us. If we didn't have more than two dresses per week, she would bring us a gift when she returned on Sunday evening. She had one day off per week--Sunday. We looked forward to see what she would bring, and we were very careful to please her. The hired men and housekeeper were each paid \$30.00 per month plus board and room.

Also about the time I started high school, my mother decided to let the housekeeper go for the summer and turned the housework over to us. We had to cook for the hired men. She gave us some cook books and told us to figure it out. Sometimes it was a disaster, but nobody complained. It was fun trying out the various recipes. I remember a watermelon cake we made. We colored the cake part pink, added raisins, and spread on green icing. We had a refrigerator, but the lady across the street didn't. Once in a rare while, she brought over food to keep for her. Once we found fish in the refrigerator so cooked it for supper. Later on, we discovered the fact that it had been put there by the lady across the street!!! My father did the grocery buying and we prepared whatever we found on the shelves or refrigerator.

About the time that we moved to National City, Mr. Kincaid in Bonita built a swimming pool in the river bed not far from our house. He used it for a storage tank for his cows, etc. and drained it every Wednesday. He allowed us to swim whenever we wanted. By that time we each had a bicycle, so we rode the six miles out to Bonita, visited with Uncle Ernest, Aunt Sadie, and



On the front porch with our doll before house was remodeled.



Backyard near the peach tree.

our small cousins, Aileen and Bernice. But we spent most of the time in the swimming pool. When it was time to leave, Aunt Sadie hung one of Bernice's diapers on the line on the front porch. That was the signal for us to scurry up the hill and ride the six miles back to National City. Even though my swimming ability never reached beyond the stroke called dog-paddle, we wanted a pool in National City. My mother agreed to put in one if we dug the hole. She measured it all out and we started digging. Even the neighborhood children came to help. We dug it about one foot deep on one end and gave up when school started. Somehow she knew the right psychology!!! She had even told us we might use the incubator rooms for dressing rooms.

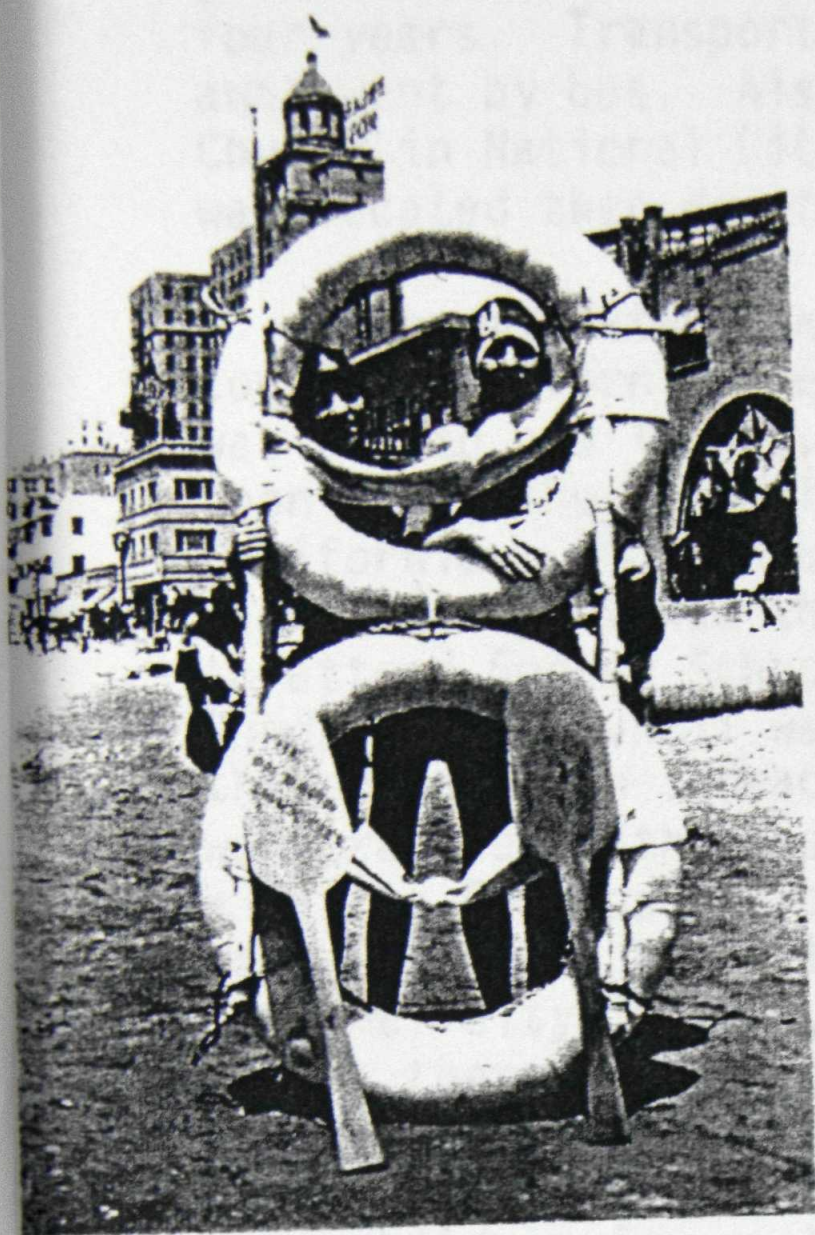
In National City, we had a washing machine with a wringer and a double wash tub for rinsing the clothes. They still had to be hung on a line to dry. We had a water heater by then but it was not automatic. It had to be lighted with a match for Monday wash and Saturday bath night. Then someone had to turn it off or it might blow up the house.

We had a friend, Marjorie Lowe, and the three of us spent most of our time together. One summer we had the brilliant idea of building a play house. So we nailed boards to posts and put them in the ground. It even had a door and a roof, but a dirt floor. This play house was in Marjorie's yard three blocks away when a cyclone went through a narrow part of National City from the bay all the way to Lincoln Acres. Many houses were partly destroyed including the Lowe's house. However, our little play house survived except for the roof which was gone completely. Mr. Lowe had to have his house repaired and when it was finished and the yard in excellent condition, he decided that our little play house detracted from the value of the property and looked completely out of place. That was when we moved it wall by wall over to our back yard.

At one time I decided to raise a garden, so one hired man helped me plant radishes. It never occurred to me that they needed water and other care. They were tough and stringy!!!

In those days, National City had almost no stores, so all our shopping was done in downtown San Diego. There wasn't any other place to buy things. We traveled by street car and later by bus. There was Marston Company, a store which sold more expensive than others such as Whitneys, Dollar Store, Woolworth, and Kress. One day, my mother gave us each \$1.00 and turned us loose in Woolworths, and told us to buy what we could for that amount of money. There was nothing costing more than 15¢. When we visited friends in San Diego, most of the streets were not paved, so we saw water wagons sprinkling the streets to settle the dust.

Before she was married, my mother had worked in a dressmaking shop in San Francisco at the time when dresses were long and very elaborate. She was the sleeve hand. She worked there at the time of the San Francisco earthquake, but since it happened at night, she was in Oakland where she lived. She taught us to sew when we were very young. As a consequence I made all my own dresses from the time I was about twelve years old. They cost less that way. We were taught to be very thrifty, and not waste anything.



Raft made by Uncle Ben.



Bathing suits.



On deck of Harvard coming home from Long Beach.



Gym clothes.

For elementary school in National City, I attended Highland School for the 5th and 6th grades, then Central School for the 7th and 8th grades. After graduation from the 8th grade, I attended Sweetwater Union High School for four years. Transportation was by my own two feet. Students who lived further away went by bus. Also we walked to Sunday School at the First Congregational Church in National City, a distance of about 1½ miles each way. The church was located then downtown on 8th Street at about A Avenue.

When my father was a boy in the mining town of Soulsbyville, Tuolumne County, California, he was forced to attend Sunday School. This obligation was not to his liking. His uncles had founded the Methodist Church there soon after they came from Cornwall, England, to work in the gold mines of California. In Cornwall, they had worked in the tin mines. Subsequently my father always vowed that if he ever had any children they would not be made to attend Sunday School. Consequently we did not even hear about church or Sunday School until we were visiting our relatives in Tuolumne County during the summer when I reached the age of seven. We attended with our cousins and wondered about the possibility of doing the same thing back home. There was a little Friends Church across the valley from us in Bonita, so every Sunday we walked down the hill and across the valley to church. When we moved to National City in 1923, some friends invited us to go to the Congregational Church there. That was how we got started. We knew nothing about different denominations. Ever since then I have gone to the Congregational Church even though my father was raised a Methodist. My mother had not attended church as a child as far as I knew anything about. During the time we were growing up, my parents were too busy with the chickens to attend church. They worked hard but when we were performing in a Christmas program or something similar, they made an effort to be there.

Almost every summer we would go to Long Beach to visit Uncle Ben and Aunt Mary for a few days. They were not blood relatives, but good friends of my parents. Uncle Ben would build for us a raft out of a huge inner tube or maybe make one by tying two inner tubes together. We would go to the beach and use the raft in the waves or in the quiet water of the lake formed by the Rainbow Pier. One time the waves were unusually strong and many people had to be rescued by lifeguards. Uncle Ben with Dorothy and me were a little too far out and Aunt Mary could see that we were not able to get back to shore so she called the lifeguards to rescue us. They came in a boat from a pier nearby and took us with the raft to the pier. We then had to walk all the way back. Uncle Ben had a great sense of humor and told us not to tell our parents, but that he would write a flowery letter explaining how some people took us on a nice boat ride without saying that we were in any danger. We were scheduled to go from Long Beach to San Diego on a boat called the Harvard. Uncle Ben and Aunt Mary put us on the boat and instructed us not to mention the rescue. In the meantime our names were mentioned on the radio and Aunt Signe had heard part of the report but not all of it. So there was concern when we were the last ones getting off the boat. When we were halfway home, my mother asked if anything unusual had happened when we were gone. When we told them that there wasn't anything unusual, my mother asked about this rescue business. Then we had to tell her but wondered how she knew because Uncle Ben told us



The horse we rode.



Mrs. Norrell,
our piano teacher.



Mrs. Waldron,
our housekeeper.

to wait until she received the letter he had written. She might think they hadn't taken good care of us.

One hired man, William Weiss, who was with us for many years first at the chicken ranch, then the hatchery, was a real character. He was a hard worker from 5:00 A.M. until dark every day, seven days a week. He had one week-end off once a month at which time he would spend his money on alcoholic beverages and be worthless for a day afterwards. The next day though he would be back at work with as much energy as ever. He did not tolerate laziness in anyone, especially another hired man. He always had his meals with us. During meal times, he ate busily without unnecessary conversation, then back to work. He wanted his foods mixed together, even ice cream. He said that it all went to the same place anyway, might as well eat it all together. Eventually when we were away on one of our few vacations, he died of alcoholism and the people in charge of the hatchery had to find someone else right away. But nobody ever worked as hard as Bill Weiss.

For Christmas one year someone gave us a little toy piano which we used to play simple tunes. My mother saw that we were interested in music so she purchased a real piano and we started having piano lessons. Mrs. Norrell came every Saturday, gave us each a two-hour lesson and had dinner with us. The piano lessons went on for about three years and we played in recitals and on one occasion Mrs. Norrell took us with her other pupils to San Diego to play on the radio. There wasn't any television at that time. I played the piano for the Sunday School songs.

For us the main meal was at noon and we called it dinner. In the evening we had a lighter meal which we called supper. My father and the hired men had coffee for breakfast, but tea for dinner and supper. Meals were served on the dot at 6:00 A.M., 12:00 noon, and 6:00 P.M. Nobody had to be called. They just came at the proper time. If we weren't there, we missed out. My mother became upset when the hired men left sugar in the bottom of the coffee cups. Nobody ever left food on their plates. If we put it on our plate we had to eat it. If we took too much, people said, "Your eyes were bigger than your stomach."

In National City we grew all our own vegetables and much of the chicken feed. There was an old work horse which we were allowed to ride from time to time. We put a saddle on it and rode it around the neighborhood. There wasn't much automobile traffic at that time and most of the streets were not paved. One punishment was to be deprived of horseback rides for a specified time.

One day when Dorothy was coasting down a little hill on a sled in the back yard, she bumped into a yellow jacket's nest. The insects were very unhappy about this situation and did not hesitate to let her know. She was stung in many places and was very uncomfortable for awhile.

On another occasion our friend Marjorie Lowe found some old sachet jackets in a drawer, so we thought it would be a good idea to go around the neighborhood selling them. One man asked about their freshness, so we told him that they had been in a drawer for several years so naturally they were still in excellent condition.



Dorothy and I in the brooder house with the young chickens.

Uncle Ben in Long Beach was short in stature and somewhat round. He would like to have been tall and thin like his wife's brothers. He mixed together some sort of concoction which he called Dr. O.B. Deadeasy's Willow Bark treatment. To prove that it was effective, he sent us a picture of himself standing next to his brother-in-law, showing that their heights were the same. There were people in front of him so the box he stood on was not visible. He was forever making up tall impossible tales to entertain us.

We learned about the principle of centrifugal force and thought it was great that we could take a bucket of water and swing it in a circle above our heads without spilling a drop. That was fine until we were demonstrating our skill in the garage. My bucket, quite by accident, hit a beam near the top of the garage and all the water in the bucket landed on my little sister Dorothy. She didn't like that at all and accused me of doing it on purpose.

One day Uncle Ernest and Aunt Sadie brought our young cousins Aileen and Bernice to National City for us to look after. We played with them a short time, then decided we had other things to do. We put a rope around their waists and tethered them to a post. They were nice little girls and didn't object at all, but it was Aunt Sadie who didn't appreciate it.

In National City there were other children to play with, but when my mother told us to be home by 4:00 P.M. she meant just that and not 4:05 P.M. One afternoon we were one hour late. For this offense we were grounded at home for one week. When we weren't in school we played games such as jacks, hop-scotch, run-sheep-run, and hide-and-seek. Since there weren't any sidewalks where we lived we did not have roller skates. We envied friends in San Diego who were able to skate on sidewalks where they lived.

On our property we had fruit trees such as figs, peaches, apricots, persimmons, and olives. My mother cured olives by using lye and brine, a process which took several days. Home cured olives had a different flavor. When people from the East came to visit us, we let them taste an olive from the tree. Some of them did not appreciate the joke we played on them.

There weren't any super markets to buy groceries. My father did the grocery shopping once a week, but when we needed something in the meantime, we walked two short blocks to the corner grocery store, the size of a small living room. The supplies were on shelves and we merely told the man what we wanted. He took it down from the shelf and we paid for it. There wasn't much variety.

In National City we had a radio which did not require head phones. All of us in the room were able to listen. We looked forward to the program on Monday evenings of Amos and Andy. My parents did not have much time to listen to the radio. It was mostly my grandmother and the housekeeper who enjoyed the program with us.

My father was not interested in sports of any kind. He couldn't see why people went fishing. He said that by the time they bought tackle and other fishing equipment and figured their time worth anything, it was cheaper to buy the fish.



th boxes of chickens ready to be delivered to customers. Each box held
10 baby chickens.

In those days private fireworks were allowed. Every Fourth of July we had our own display and invited all the neighborhood children. We were taught safety and were very careful. Besides the common fire crackers, we had some spectacular shows with sparklers, Roman candles, snakes, and pin wheels. What we had was on a much smaller scale than the public displays we see today.

Most clothes were made of cotton, wool, or silk. The only synthetic fabric then was called rayon or artificial silk which was not as good as the material made by the silk worm. Stockings were made of cotton or rayon until nylon was invented in the late 1930s. Then nylon was considered a wonder material because it was so strong and would not wear out so fast. Many other synthetic fibers were invented after World War II. Many people preferred to have clothes made from a combination of cotton or wool with synthetic fibers.

During the five years that Uncle Ernest and Aunt Sadie managed the chicken ranch in Bonita, they took off two weeks every summer and drive their car to Tuolumne County where most of their relatives lived. Sometimes we went with them because we had the same relatives to visit. It usually took two complete days to travel the 550 miles with a stopover at Bakersfield. In those days when we traveled, we stayed at auto courts. They had either a kitchen in each unit or sometimes there was a community kitchen where we visited with other travelers. We furnished our own bedding but there beds with mattresses. We brought our own cooking pots and dishes, usually metal. All this was for 75¢ or \$1.00 per night for four people. \$2.00 was considered by us to be a high price which we could not afford.

The first time I saw snow on the ground was the time when I was fourteen years old that a friend from church took us to the mountains in San Diego County. It was a thrill!!! We knew it would be cold and that it would look like the pictures we saw on Christmas cards. I had seen snow once before when someone in the second grade had gone to the mountains and brought some back for us in a little red wagon. Many more years went by before I had the privilege of seeing it fall from the sky. That was in Arizona near Flagstaff. We just stopped the car and watched it for a while.

When we moved to National City in 1923 our house was located on the northeast corner of 16th Street and P Avenue. But in 1927 P Avenue was graded and paved. At that time the name was changed to Palm Avenue and then there was much more traffic. Also the hills were not as steep.

My cousin's father-in-law, L.N. Skinner, in 1892, established the first furniture store in San Diego. There were only a few buildings then all of which were close to 5th and Broadway. Later, sometime in the 1930s, when more people came to live here and San Diego spread out, his son Gene Skinner who was my cousin's husband, relocated the store out on University Avenue at about 25 Street.

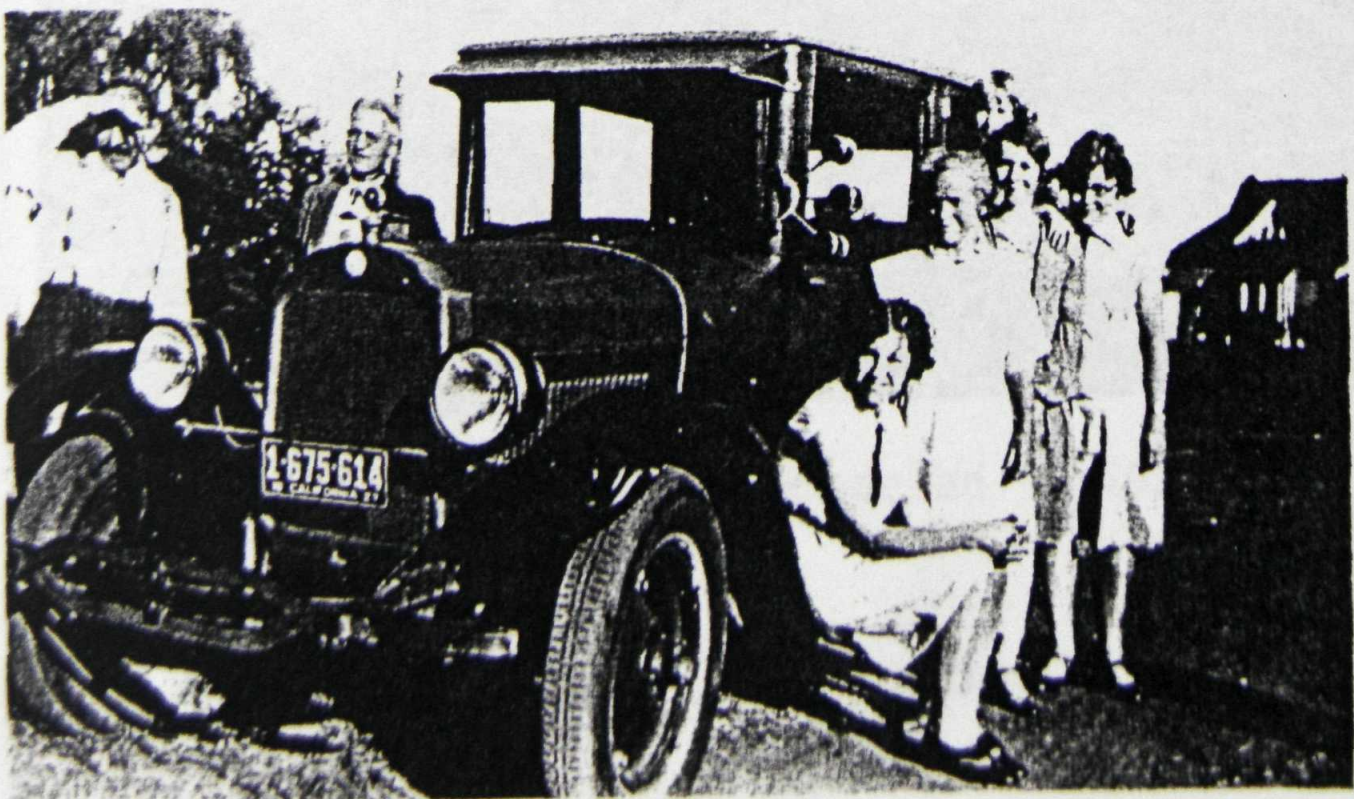
My mother had arrived in San Diego in 1885 at the age of two years. They lived in a small house in downtown San Diego. Her brother, who was my Uncle Wesley, started a bicycle shop in San Diego. He had a partner, so it was called Hale-Fultz Company. Mr. Hale did the bookkeeping and Uncle Wesley worked in the back of the shop with bicycles and lawn mowers. Later he moved to a small shop



Uncle Fred Fultz with his new car.



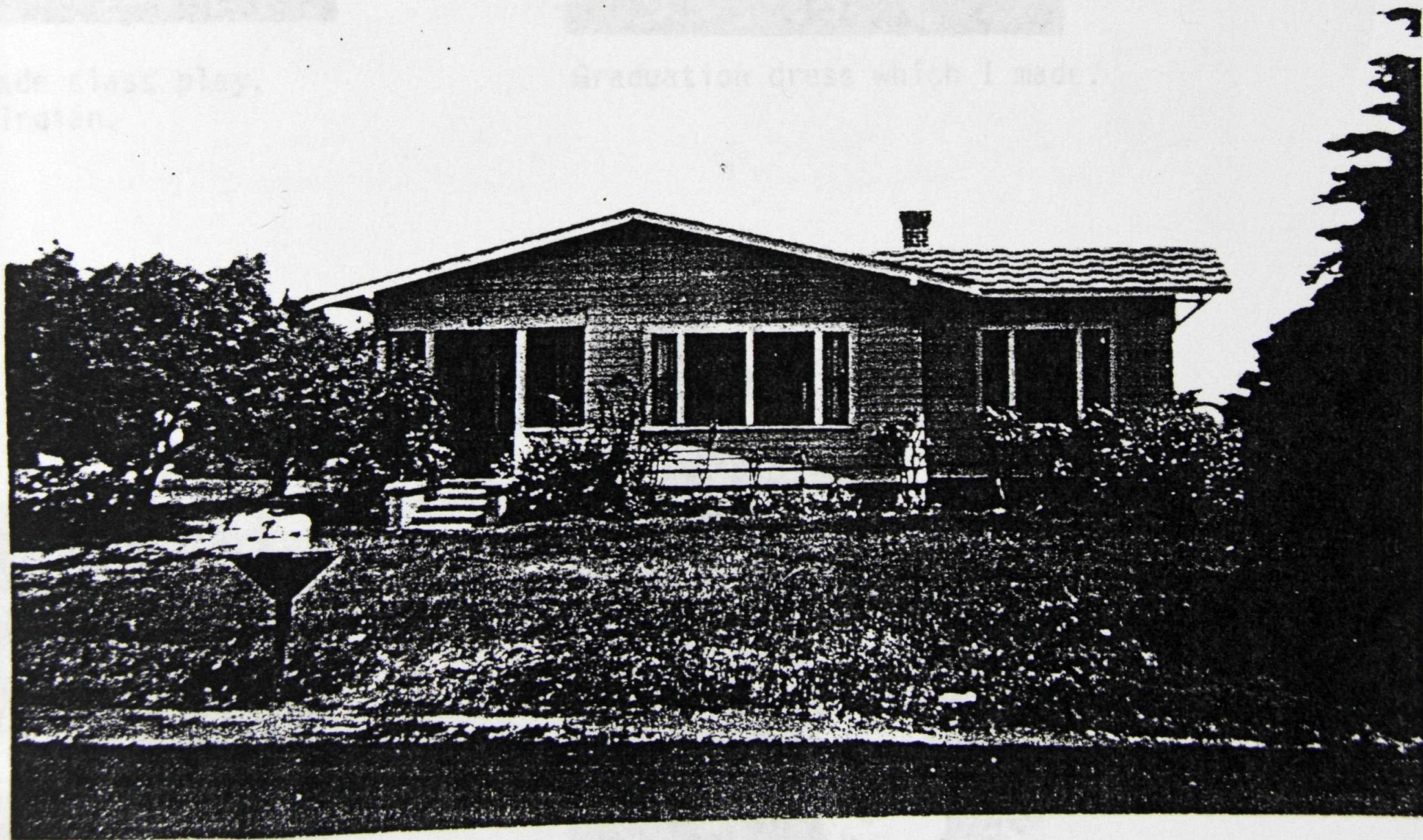
A friend with Uncle Wesley and the rabbits they caught.



The Burnell family came to visit.

near 5th and University. In fact he was in the bicycle business for more than 60 years. At the age of 80 he was still working in the bicycle shop.

When I was a freshman in high school I brought home some report cards that left a little to be desired. My mother took care of that problem by promising me \$100.00 if I should graduate from high school as a life member of the California Scholarship Federation. That spurred me into action and do home work. As a result, I was 3rd honor student which was great because the first two had to make the speeches at the graduation ceremony. I graduated from Sweetwater Union High School in 1931 when it was the only high school south of San Diego. Students came from Chula Vista, San Ysidro, Bonita, and Sunnyside as well as National City where the school was located on 30th and Highland, its present location. There were only about 700 in the entire school, grades 9-12. The junior high schools were started later.



Our house after it was remodeled in 1931.



4th grade class play.
as an Indian.



Graduation dress which I made.



Dutch girl.



We are all ready for Halloween.





Graduation from Sweetwater Union High School, June, 1931.